



News Release

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Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas)
Imperial National Wildlife Refuge Yuma, Arizona
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For Release: February 21, 2005

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IMPERIAL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE CONDUCTING PRESCRIBED FIRES

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Imperial National Wildlife Refuge will be conducting a series of prescribed fires beginning the week of February 28 concluding on March 3, 2006. The Refuge is continuing a proactive land management approach by using fire as a tool. Two prescribed burns approximately 110 acres in size will reduce the future possibility of wildfires while enhancing critical wildlife habitat.

Prescribed burning, under an approved plan with adequate firefighting resources, and appropriate weather conditions is the best method to prevent loss from a wildfire and is an effective habitat management tool. Firefighters from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management will be assisting local Refuge Fire Management personnel.

Prescribed burning reduces the total amount of vegetation and mimics the natural disturbance events that once occurred along the Colorado River. Refuge biologists work closely with Refuge fire personnel to develop a plan that will benefit wildlife and promote the habitat needs of endangered species. Prescribed burning treatments, while expensive, may cost as little as one tenth that of a large scale, wildfire suppression effort. All burn plans are developed using national standards by qualified and experienced fire management professionals. They are extensively reviewed and must be approved by the Refuge Manager prior to ignition.

Fire Management personnel at Imperial National Wildlife Refuge will closely monitor weather and fuel conditions to maximize results and minimize smoke impacts on adjacent communities. Burns will only be conducted during the daytime hours. Highway 95 and the community of Martinez Lake may be impacted by smoke for short periods of time. Smoke may also be visible to residents in Yuma and the surrounding areas.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.